



# News Release

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## **Corps opens comment period on draft biological opinion**

OMAHA—A 30-day comment period on the draft biological opinion on the management of the Missouri River by the Army Corps of Engineers kicks-off today.

“Dr. Joseph Westphal, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, concurred with requests from the Missouri congressional delegation, several basin Tribes and the Missouri River Basin Association for a public review of the draft opinion,” said Brig. Gen. Carl Strock, Northwestern Division Engineer. “The comment period will run through September 29,” he added.

“The opinion is posted on our homepage at [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil). It will also be available on compact disk,” added General Strock. “Comments will be accepted by mail and via the Internet.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared the draft opinion as part of its Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultations with the Corps. A team of Corps and Service members evaluated the current operation of the main stem dams and reservoirs, the bank stabilization and navigation channel from Sioux City, Iowa, to the mouth, and the Corps’ operation of the dams on the Kansas River.

The opinion describes actions the Corps must take to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of three species of fish and shorebirds listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. These actions concentrate on the regulation of river flows, adaptive management efforts, regulation of reservoir storage, and habitat restoration initiatives.

Comments dealing with the biology contained in the draft will be provided to the Service for consideration as it proceeds with preparation of the final biological opinion that is due November 1.

Corps opens comment period 2.2.2.

The final opinion will provide significant input for the development of a preferred alternative for the revised draft environmental impact statement on the operation of the Missouri River dams.

“While the comment period on the draft biological opinion may change our near-term schedule for developing a preferred alternative for the Master Manual, we remain committed to implementing a revised Manual by March 2003,” said General Strock.

The draft opinion is available at [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil). For a free compact disk, please write to: Cathy Boscardin, Northwestern Division, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144.

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